



**Hon. Pedro R. Pierluisi**  
**Statement for “Puerto Rico, USA State of Mind” Reception**  
**Thursday, July 30, 2009**

Thank you, Nicole. I would like to join Nicole in welcoming you to the “Puerto Rico, USA State of Mind” Reception. I am excited to see so many old friends of Puerto Rico, as well as many new ones. In particular, I would like to thank my colleagues in the House who have taken the time to join us. Thank you all for coming.

This past month has been an exciting time for the people of Puerto Rico and not just because of this great gathering here on Capitol Hill. Earlier this month, we witnessed the confirmation hearings of Judge Sonia Sotomayor to be the next Supreme Court justice. As most of you know, Judge Sotomayor’s parents were born in Puerto Rico, and people on the Island feel considerable pride in her nomination. Indeed, Judge Sotomayor’s story has inspired countless Americans—whether Puerto Rican or not. Armed with little more than the fierce love of her family and an old set of encyclopedias, this determined little girl from a Bronx housing project has gone to Princeton, to Yale, to our country’s most hallowed legal institutions—and now, if confirmed, to the highest court in the land.

Judge Sotomayor’s nomination has also generated great interest about Puerto Rico. People are asking questions about our population, our history, and our place in the United States—What does it mean to be a territory? How can an island with four million residents have only one member of Congress? These are good questions! Puerto Rico’s status has been unresolved since the island came under U.S. sovereignty in

1898. Although residents of Puerto Rico have shed blood in defense of this country for over 90 years, in that time they have never been given the chance to express their views about their political relationship with the United States in the context of a fair, neutral, and democratic process sponsored by Congress. I have introduced a bill that would give them that opportunity. I am confident that, in Puerto Rico's 111<sup>th</sup> year under the U.S. flag, this—the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress—will act to give Puerto Rico the voice it deserves.

Tonight, I invite you to experience a little flavor of Puerto Rico and to learn more about America's "Shining Star in the Caribbean." When people think of Puerto Rico, many envision sandy beaches, delicious rum, and—I should add—beautiful women. The richness of Puerto Rico's landscape is perhaps best represented by the tropical rainforest at Yunque, which is competing to be named one of the seven wonders of the world.

Fewer people realize, however, that Puerto Rico is a bridge that connects the states with Latin America. Many industries are located in Puerto Rico, including a number of pharmaceutical and medical device companies. These businesses are driving Puerto Rico's economic engine, and we are proud that they have chosen Puerto Rico as a home.

Thank you for coming, and enjoy the evening.